Fourth Review Conference
of the Parties to the Treaty
on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

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LETTER DATED 11 SEPTEMBER 1990 FROM THE HEAD OF THE OBSERVER DELEGATION OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA TO THE FOURTH REVIEW CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE TREATY ON THE NON-PROLIFERATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CONFERENCE

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a Basic Position Paper stating the principled positions of the People's Republic of China on some major issues concerning the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

I would be grateful if this letter and the Basic Position Paper could be circulated as an official document of the Fourth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in accordance with its Rules of Procedure.

Annex

Basic Position Paper
Presented by China

The Fourth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is convened at a time when the international situation has undergone tremendous changes and nuclear disarmament remains to be an urgent task. The result of the current Review Conference will have great impact on the future of the Treaty. In sending an observer delegation to this conference the Chinese Government demonstrates the importance it attaches to the conference.

China would like to state its principled positions on the following major issues related to the Treaty:

I

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is one of the most widely accepted international legal instruments in the field of arms control and disarmament. Since its entry into force, the Treaty has played some positive role in preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons and maintaining world peace and stability. It reflects the legitimate desire of the non-nuclear-weapon states, the developing countries in particular, for the complete prohibition of nuclear weapons and for a world free from nuclear weapons.

However, the Treaty does not strike a balance between the obligations of the nuclear-weapon States Parties and those of the non-nuclear-weapon States Parties, and it lacks provisions banning deployment of nuclear weapons on the territories of the non-nuclear-weapon countries. This is the main flaw of the Treaty.

For the purpose of maintaining world peace and promoting international security and stability, China pursues a policy of not to advocate, encourage or engage in nuclear weapon proliferation and not to help any country to develop nuclear weapons. China has made its contributions to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

The Chinese Government supports the three main objectives of the Treaty, i.e., the prevention of nuclear weapon proliferation, promotion of nuclear disarmament and enhancement of international cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. It maintains that

these three objectives are interrelated and inseparable. China stands for the prevention of proliferation of nuclear weapons. At the meantime it holds that the prevention of nuclear proliferation is not the final aim, but a measure and a step in the process leading to the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons.

However, reviewing the history of the past 20 years, people have noted with regret that the three objectives set by the Treaty were time and again separated from each other. Some people, while laying undue emphasis on the prevention of nuclear proliferation and imposing a variety of restrictions on the legitimate activities of the non-nuclear-weapon States in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, shirked the due responsibilities of their own for nuclear disarmament and vied with each other in a race to improve their nuclear arms both quantitatively and qualitatively, and even deployed large numbers of their nuclear weapons on the territories of other countries. Such practice has given rise to resentment among the non-nuclear-weapon States and undermined the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

II

China holds the view that to achieve the objective for a world free from nuclear weapons, it is not only necessary to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons, but more importantly, it is imperative to completely prohibit and thoroughly destroy nuclear weapons. Non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and nuclear disarmament should complement each other. Achieving significant result in the field of nuclear disarmament is the most effective way of preventing the nuclear weapons proliferation. And only after significant progress is made in the field of nuclear disarmament can the authority of the nuclear non-proliferation regime be strengthened; meanwhile, maintaining an effective nuclear non-proliferation regime will contribute to the attainment of complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

China has consistently stood for the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons. Facts have shown that to attain this objective, the United States and the Soviet Union, the two countries possessing the largest nuclear arsenals, must faithfully fulfil their special obligations by taking the lead in ceasing the test, production and deployment of nuclear weapons and drastically reducing all types of nuclear weapons they have deployed both inside and outside their respective countries. The tangible progress they achieve in all these aspects will create conditions for the

convening of a broadly representative international conference on nuclear disarmament with the participation of all nuclear-weapon States.

China understands the urgent desire of the non-nuclear-weapon States for a comprehensive nuclear test ban at an early date. The objective of comprehensive nuclear test ban should be reached in the context of an effective nuclear disarmament process. China participated in the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on Nuclear Test Ban established by the Conference on Disarmament in 1990.

China holds the view that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones and zones of peace on a voluntarily negotiated basis by countries concerned in various regions, and respect for the status of the nuclear-weapon-free zones and undertaking of corresponding obligations by the nuclear-weapon States constitute an effective measure against proliferation of nuclear weapons and promoting nuclear disarmament. China has signed and ratified the relevant Protocols attached to the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty respectively.

China stands that to end the arms race in outer space between the major space powers,to halt development of space weapons and to denuclearize the outer space are also important to the efforts aimed at the prevention of nuclear proliferation and promotion of nuclear disarmament.

III

To promote the peaceful uses of nuclear energy for the benefit of humanity is an important objective of the Treaty, to which due attention should be paid.

China believes that when conducting international cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, it is necessary for the parties concerned to adopt appropriate measures to preclude the proliferation of nuclear weapons, including nuclear explosive devices. This constitutes the prerequisite for the cooperation. However, the prevention of proliferation of nuclear weapons should not be used as an excuse to hinder or restrict the international cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

With regard to international cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, the Chinese Government has adopted the guiding principle of activeness, prudence and responsibility and formulated corresponding policies. As a Member State of IAEA, China strictly abides by its

Statute and has made its contribution to the international cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. China's nuclear export is governed strictly by three basic principles, namely, 1. acceptance of IAEA's safeguards; 2. commitment to its use for peaceful purposes; 3. no retransfer to a third country without China's consent. As for its nuclear import, China undertakes to use it only for peaceful purposes. In 1988, the Chinese Government concluded the Voluntary Offer Agreement with the IAEA under which China has submitted some of its nuclear facilities to the Agency for safeguards.

IV

The Chinese Government has consistently maintained that in order to attain the objective of the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons at an early date, the non-nuclear-weapon States have renounced the option of acquiring or developing nuclear weapons, it is therefore reasonable and just for the non-nuclear-weapon States to demand an assurance against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against them. China solemnly declared on the day of its acquisition of the nuclear weapon that at no time and under no circumstances would China be the first to use nuclear weapons. China has also undertaken not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or nuclear-weapon-free zones.

Based on the above principled positions, China is in favour of concluding an international agreement on not to be the first to use nuclear weapons as well as an international legal instrument on assuring non-nuclear-weapon States and nuclear-weapon-free zones against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.